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a splendid opening there is for educated young women in the extension of library service in France.

I wanted to tell you some of the things of human interest I met, but I have time only to say that the work is going on. One young man told me face to face that these books were the only things, many times, that kept him from going insane. Another man stopped me on the street and said, "You people don't understand what these books have been to us in these devastated regions: we don't know the language, there is no shop where we can buy books, and the spirit which you show in giving us the books, and your own personal service, is something that we shall not forget when we go back home." I want to plead with the librarians to make conditions in their libraries such that when these young men come back, they may retain these exalted ideas of what libraries mean.

I hope I shall be excused if I say the service of the women librarians was more often mentioned than that of the men. Perhaps it was so because I was a woman, and it was loyalty to an ideal. But over and over again they said, "When I go back home I want to tell you that our public library is going to have one 'pusher,' one 'booster'"—one anything, according to the degree of enthusiasm and the vocabulary. Still another man said, "I feel like taking off my hat to you women librarians; here you are over here, on your own initiative, while I would go home on a raft today if I could, and take my chances on getting there; but here you are, staying and working as I have seen you work in this building. I don't understand it." And he took off his trench cap and said, "Here's to the women of the American Library Association!" I re-echo his words.

SIX MONTHS AT HEADQUARTERS AND IN THE FIELD

BY THERESA HITCHLER, *Superintendent, Catalog Department, Public Library, Brooklyn, N. Y.*

My little talk this evening is to be just an informal ramble. I feel that I have been privileged and very fortunate indeed to have camped on both sides of the fence—in the enclosure and out in the field. No one who has not done that really understands what the library war service has meant.

When I first considered the offer that was made to me and came down to Washington and saw Mr. Milam, one of the first questions I asked him was whether I would have a chance to do work in the field. This was his reply: "Miss Hitchler, that depends entirely on you. You may go out in the field just as often as you consider it necessary and feel that you can leave your work at the office. You don't even have to ask me. All I ask is that you leave word where you are going, so we may communicate with you."

That sounded lovely, and when I went to

Washington on December first I had visions of going right out in the field. When I tell you it never occurred to me that I could leave my desk during the first ten weeks, it will give you some idea of how foxy he was. The very first day I arrived I had two shocks; one came before Mr. Milam arrived. I was standing in that tremendous map room where most of the service was conducted, when a door behind me opened and an elderly gentleman looked in. I was directly in the line of his vision, and he appeared to be looking at me when he said, "I don't know why you don't all go home; the war is over!" That was my greeting. He was the legitimate tenant of that room and anxious to have us get out.

The second shock came when Mr. Milam turned over the five hundred and fifty-odd camps throughout the country to me and said, "Go to it." I didn't even know

where some of these places were; I wasn't familiar with the names of many of the camps, I am ashamed to say, and their places on the map just represented dots to me. I have learned a great deal since.

The personnel at headquarters is something that has become very precious and very dear to me. I would like to tell you not so much what we did, what we at headquarters did, what the library war service did, as what it did for us. I don't feel that in comparison with what I got I gave anything at all. The men and women with whom I was permitted to cast my lot for those six months had the finest, most wonderful, most united spirit for service that I have ever known. There was never, so far as I could tell, one thought of self; never one thought except what we could do to help and serve. We felt not that we were doing it, but that the American people had entrusted the American Library Association with this work to do for those boys overseas and on this side, and all that we attempted to do was to carry out that work to the best of our ability. I can liken headquarters, I think, to nothing better than a huge mainspring, a huge dynamo, which was kept ever busy, ever whirling, keeping other machines in motion, sending out its work in various avenues of service to all parts of the country, to all sorts of people, the avenues growing wider and wider as the vast possibilities of our work were impressed upon us.

Of course, there were some imperfect tools and some imperfect mechanism. We know that as well as anybody can tell it to us, and if we had another war, why, we would do ever so much better, but, of course, we don't want another war. Looking back over those six months there are many things, in the light of my later knowledge, that I feel I could have done better, but at the time I simply did what I could.

The acting general director was also an acting generous director, because he left the heads with full authority and full responsibility, so that we had the incentive

always to do the very best we could. Our records—records of work, records of books sent out and placed in camps and vessels, and in individual hands—are large, but still far from complete. They do not nearly tell the story, because librarians out in the camps were far too busy actually serving these books, to keep an exact record of the number handled. Many of our workers were not on the headquarters' pay roll; they were workers who were devoting as much time as they could spare from their legitimate work; many of the workers probably you have never heard of—certainly I never heard of them until I began visiting in the field; men and women who were simply content to do the work, unnoticed, with no thought except the thought of work well accomplished.

My first ten weeks were rather hectic ones, because I had to get acquainted not only with the camps and with their personnel, but with everything that pertained to the machinery at headquarters. For ten weeks I stuck to it, even though I had an invitation from the acting director to make a visit to the field. I think he knew when he asked me that I could not possibly conscientiously go. At the end of ten weeks I made my first trip, a lengthy one at that, a trip of two weeks to the southern part of the country. This first trip was down on the border, to San Antonio; I thought at the time of going to El Paso, also. I said, "I may as well go to El Paso; it is just a step across from San Antonio to El Paso!" I found it wasn't so! I met Miss Stockett, who has done splendid work down there; but I am not going to tell about her work, for she herself is going to tell it at one of the camp librarians' meetings.

When I got to San Antonio, we held a meeting of camp and hospital librarians and some officers from the neighborhood. Major Stark, who had been sent from headquarters to look after the military work on the Mexican border, was present at the time, and spoke. On my way I stopped at New Orleans and visited the various camps, Navy and Army, in and

near the city. The librarian who was supervisor down there told me about the boys, who were farmers in that district, on wide stretches of land between cities, where they did not know anything about libraries, where they never had had books, where the boys had never known that there were books on farming and agriculture, and he just begged for such books. He said the boys were so eager to perfect themselves, to read up a little on their chosen work, that he just begged that when this war service was over, if we could not start libraries in those neighborhoods, on those flats, so to speak, at any rate we would send all the books on farming and agriculture to the homes of these individual boys, so that they could go on. One boy was reading his twentieth book on farming, so you can imagine what it meant to them.

On my way on this trip I met many fine women in the profession. My mind was carried back to what I had heard at Saratoga, and, of course, when I went to headquarters I was on the lookout for them. I was very pleasurably surprised and pleased to find that women in some instances really received first choice. I know that time and time again I made a recommendation, and passed the name to the acting director general, when he himself, on getting the name of a man, said, "Why not a woman?" In the beginning I didn't always make an attempt to try to find a woman to fit the position, but took the names handed to me; later we sought women all over the country, and wherever we had an available one we kept track of her and kept her on our list until such time as we could place her. This was part of my own work, and I would like the Association to know, that during the six months for which I can vouch, there was never a time when women were not pushed forward, and not always by a woman.

To go back to headquarters for a minute, one of the privileges (and this applies to the field work also) that all of us who worked there enjoyed so much, was

that we rubbed shoulders and wits with so many big people who were not in our own profession, and you don't know how stimulating that was to further effort and to future ambitions. Of course, as I told you, we at headquarters ourselves could pick flaws in the work that we have done, and I know that when we get together like this, as a family, we do that very often; but do let us be a little careful how we pick flaws, because, after all, what we are doing is maligning a member of our own family.

I have not yet finished my first trip, because on the way back I stopped at Charleston; I was put off the train at five o'clock in the morning, and at 7 o'clock I was met by a man and a flivver. The supervisor at Charleston was Miss Titcomb. I will use the expression that everybody did who came in contact with her—she is one of the "live wires" in the profession. I asked the privilege of being present when she did her transport work, but the representative from Washington who went down there gave me a very vivid word picture of what she had done. Just fancy her starting out at dawn—at 5 o'clock in the morning, and riding over nine miles of the most awful road to the Navy yard, and scaling a rope ladder to the ship, in order to see whether the books were there for the men coming back on the transport. She did not tell these stories herself, but the boys said, "We should have had some like you on the other side."

I want to tell you what I told a Y. M. C. A. representative, a Y general director, when he said something to me about our modesty and our perfect willingness to do all the work and take none of the credit. That was a wrong way to approach me, because I do not believe in it. He said it in the belief that he was paying me and the Association a high compliment. I said to him, "You have the wrong idea; I don't care, and no individual who is engaged in this American Library Association war work, cares a whoop whether he or she gets any personal

credit, but I want you to know right now that the American Library Association does want credit for all it does, wants to be known to have done it; it is the only way to justify itself. It is nonsense to say, 'I will hide myself under a bushel, and let someone else take the credit,' and let the American people remain in ignorance of the fact that the money which they gave us to spend for this work was being spent by us in doing efficient work." If I had time I would like to dwell on the many wonderful things that have come to my knowledge of the work of the Y. M. C. A. officers and others, and it is not from any feeling of self-glorification that I speak as I do, because I really don't care in the least personally, and I know that none of the men and women who worked with me at headquarters felt differently; but I do think that the American Library Association ought to have all the credit, all the glory for what it has done. I would rather it came from outside. I don't believe it is well for us to keep saying it, but I think our service, our work, has echoed to every corner of the United States, and to other parts of the world, and I think what we want to do now, is to see that that echo never dies away, and if we can keep it up only by shouting, let's shout.

This great enterprise which the American people entrusted to the American Library Association, and operated through its library war service, with all its limitations and defects, is really a wonderful piece of work, wonderfully carried out.

When I visited the New Hampshire and Maine district, on the second trip, I spent a day at the Naval prison in Portsmouth. There I had a very interesting talk with the Commander, and then he turned me over to an ensign who had charge of the educational department. He took me to the library and showed me what books they had and what kind they needed.

An amusing thing happened while I was there. There were three boys standing in

the library; he told me many of these were college boys, of course, imprisoned for military misdemeanors, not criminal offenses. He said, "I want to see the librarian; where is he?" "He isn't here, sir," was the reply. "Well, go find him," he said. I thought the boy looked at me in a peculiar way, and then at the officer, and went out. He came back in two or three minutes and said, "He cannot be found, sir." In a very serious voice the officer said, "He must be found! Trail him; hunt him up!" And the boy looked at me and then edged up to the officer and saluted again and whispered something out of the corner of his mouth, and at the same time glanced over at the corner of the room. Of course, my eyes turned in the same direction. The ensign said to me, "Would you mind stepping out of the room for a moment?" With a serious face I said, "Not at all," but I had seen the bunk in the corner of the room, and I knew that the librarian had not been up and dressed when we entered and had immediately ducked, and they did not quite know how to get out of it.

My time is up and I must close. Let me do so by telling you a final story. The insignia of our Association—A. L. A.—has been interpreted variously by various laymen, but the most unusual meaning was ascribed to it by a barber in the cosmopolitan city of New York. One of our transport librarians was being administered to in one of the large "tonsorial parlors" in the liveliest and most central part of the city, by a foreigner of oriental aspect. Suddenly the latter's eye was arrested by the A. L. A. pin on the librarian's coat. "Ah, you are a Turk, yes?" exclaimed the barber, with an air of wonderment and increased respect. "Why no, what makes you think that?" responded the astonished librarian. Pointing to the pin and breathing the letters according to his view, the barber replied in a hushed tone, "Allah"!